

Town and DEC Seize Illegal Oysters Harvested from Long Island Sound and Mount Sinai Harbor

posted on 7/8/2016 12:17:00 PM



Farmingville, NY – In two separate incidents, the Town of Brookhaven and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) seized nearly 2,000 oysters illegally harvested from the Long Island Sound and Mount Sinai Harbor.

On June 30, the Brookhaven Town Harbormaster stationed at Port Jefferson Harbor received a tip from an anonymous source that an oysterman was in the Long Island Sound outside of Flax Pond in Old Field taking undersized oysters (seed, under 3 inches). The Harbormaster contacted the DEC and they awaited the arrival of the boat in Port Jefferson Harbor. When it arrived, the oysters were inspected and found to be undersized. Violations were issued to the oysterman and DEC officers assisted the Town in re-seeding the eight bags of oysters back into the sound.

In the second incident, which occurred on July 3, Brookhaven Town Bay Constables witnessed four persons taking oysters from uncertified waters in Mt. Sinai Harbor. They approached the four individuals, seized the oysters and re-planted them back into the harbor in deeper water.

Supervisor Ed Romaine said, "I commend the swift action by our Town employees and the DEC to confiscate and return the oysters back to the water where they belong. We have invested much time and money seeding oysters and clams to help restore the shellfish population and clean up our waterways and we will not tolerate illegal harvesting."

Councilwoman Jane Bonner, whose council district includes Mount Sinai Harbor said, "It is very disappointing when people break the law without any concern for its effect on the environment. For many years, shellfish were over harvested and we are now working hard to increase their population. I urge anyone who knows of illegal shell fishing to report it to the Town or DEC."

Councilwoman Valerie M. Cartright, whose council district includes Port Jefferson Harbor, said, "I applaud the actions of our Harbormasters and the DEC. Shellfish are vital to our harbor, providing a natural means of removing harmful nitrogen from our waters. I urge residents to both respect harvesting laws and to get involved in our local

mariculture programs that help cultivate the shellfish populations in our harbors and bays."

The Town of Brookhaven is very aggressive in its efforts to reseed waterways through its Shellfish Mariculture Program. Since 2007, it has been running a community based shellfish nursery program at its Mariculture Facility at Cedar Beach in Mt. Sinai. Each year, the Town provides schools and organizations including the Moriches Bay Project, Stony Brook Yacht Club, Western Suffolk BOCES, the Mount Sinai School District and Friends of Bellport Bay with shellfish rafts, mooring supplies to anchor the rafts and shellfish to stock the rafts. They do the work required while being supervised by the Town of Brookhaven personnel. The Town also assists in the installation and removal of the rafts and periodic maintenance.

Increasing the number of oysters and other shellfish in our waterways helps to reduce the abundance of algae that can lead to fish kills and diminished oxygen concentration and thus improve water quality. Oysters feed on floating microscopic algae by filtering them out of the overlying water. One adult oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water a day.

Division of Public Information * Office of the Supervisor

One Independence Hill • Farmingville • NY 11738 • Phone 631-451-6595